



Introduction

The Simple, Elegant Solution

This book is a movement and a hopeful call to action. It is also a road map, a Swiss Army knife, and an emotional support system. It has to be all of these things—because that’s what most of us need to make the real, sustained changes that save our health and protect our planet. We see the evidence of climate change all around us: wildfires, catastrophic hurricanes, flooding, mudslides. We sense that we’ve reached a tipping point, that we have to make changes now if we hope to leave a habitable world to our children.

I’m particularly passionate about this because I’m a mom. Like most moms, I have wiped many a tear, runny nose, and dirty bottom. I’ve been peed on and barfed on, and I would take down anyone who tried to hurt my children. This fierce, mama-bear, protective love is locked into my DNA. It’s an instinct, a drive in all moms and dads. All humans! How would we have survived otherwise? Even if we don’t have kids, we feel this protective drive about our family, our pets, our friends. This fierce love drives me, every single day, to make the world a better place for all of our children to grow up in.

I’m also a multitasker, like so many of us in this fast world. I have five kids. I’m an entrepreneur, educator, and wrangler of dogs; a former model and actress; and a current daughter, sister, aunt, and mission-driven juggler of way too many things. I’ve spent many years

channeling my fierce protective love into creating initiatives to help save the planet: Red Carpet Green Dress, an organization that challenges and helps the fashion industry to become more environmentally responsible; Plant Power Task Force, an advocacy organization focused on raising awareness and funding highly respected research into the effects of animal agriculture on the environment; MUSE School, an environmental educational organization spanning early childhood to twelfth grade that taps into the passions within each child and awakens their thirst for learning as well as their sense of deep responsibility for protecting the earth and all of its inhabitants, which is also the first plant-based school in the nation (and where OMD first began!); Food Forest Organics, the first completely plant-based market and café in New Zealand; and our newest endeavor, Cameron Family Farms, an exciting chance for us to bring all our philosophies about plant-based eating and environmentalism to life, giving people high-quality, widely available options that will make eating whole-food, plant-based meals more convenient and affordable for all. And for eighteen years, I've been married to an amazing father, husband, and partner, a turbo-charged filmmaker, deep-sea explorer, and Renaissance man, James Cameron. My Jim.

Now, I know my limitations. I'm most definitely *not* a doctor. And I'm not a scientist. Yet I'm a research and information junkie, and I spend a lot of my time trying to get the most credible, up-to-date information out there from real scientists, climatologists, doctors, and researchers. Every ounce of my being that's not devoted to my family is in service to environmental advocacy, caring for our planet, and creating a better, healthier world.

I am fully aware that in so many ways, I've lived a charmed life. I still pinch myself every day, and I know that the big suffering and pain so pervasive in the world isn't often part of my direct experience. Yet I still put my pants on one leg at a time. This year, my father died, my aunt Betsy died, and my mother broke her hip—all

in one week. No amount of magic or money in the world can take away grieving and loss.

Along with extreme love and gratitude, I feel a great responsibility to make the world a better place for all our children and many generations to come. In fact, I can barely pass an infant or a kid on the street, or in a grocery store—anywhere—without being reminded of the seriousness and urgency of this commitment.

I WROTE THIS BOOK because I know how hard it can be to get through the day, hurtling from one meeting (or deadline, orthodontist appointment, parent teacher conference, errand, or after-school activity) to another.

I know how many competing demands we have in our lives, each one battling the other for our time, our attention, our energy. Sometimes simply getting through the day feels like a Herculean task.







And whether we're parents or not, we all take care of so many people and problems all the time. Heaping one more consideration onto our shoulders may just be too much. *Oh, great—now I have to take care of the planet too?* Especially when it just seems so huge and unsolvable.




That's the beauty of One Meal a Day for the Planet, or OMD: by switching one meat- or dairy-based meal to one plant-based meal a day, we can slash our personal water and carbon footprint of our diet by about 25 percent. If we go fully plant-based, we can slash it by 60 percent. With this one simple shift, we can cut our risk of heart disease, cancer, and diabetes; lose weight; and even improve our sex lives. With this one shift, we can also help protect the soil, water, and air for all of us. With OMD, we can check off many diverse to-do (or wish-to-do) boxes on our lists simultaneously. We can take care of everyone in our lives—our children, friends, partner, siblings, parents, and especially ourselves—*while* we take care of our community, the planet, and the future, all at the same time.

Talk about the ultimate life-changing hack.

With OMD, I never, ever want to guilt you into changing your behavior. We all know that “guilt” or “should” or “being right” doesn’t fuel meaningful and sustained change. My goal is to share how easy, fun, delicious, energizing, and *gratifying* plant-based eating can be. I also want to acknowledge that it can be seriously hard to change the way you’re used to eating, shopping, and cooking, so I want to help you gracefully handle the challenges of incorporating more plant-based meals into your life. I’m going to show you dozens of my family’s favorite recipes, strategies, and work-arounds that will help you radically boost the nutritional quality of your foods without sacrificing flavor or satisfaction. We’ll do this in a way that is at your pace, is to your taste, and fits right into your life, and I promise you’ll notice the impact almost immediately. I’m here to testify (occasionally with a bullhorn and pom-pom!) that the transformation can be nothing less than life-changing, and that’s my hope for you and for the planet.

That’s why we call OMD “the simple, elegant solution.” With this one tiny shift, you can:

-  Lose weight or maintain a healthy weight, easily and effortlessly, without feeling deprived or counting a single calorie
-  Help reverse fuzzy thinking, low energy, prediabetes, high cholesterol, muscle or joint pain—while you lengthen your life
-  Become one of those “glowy” people who radiate youth with their clear gorgeous skin, shiny hair, and sparkling eyes
-  Genetically program your kids for optimal health, setting them up to be lean and strong, with rock-star immunity, for life
-  Save money once spent on pricey meat and enjoy more nourishing, clean organic produce and delicious sides, sauces, and condiments
-  Cut down on trips to the doctor, save on medical costs, and, in some cases, reduce or completely eliminate medications

-  Eat delicious food that satisfies and surprises you, and wakes up your taste buds to a whole new dimension of exciting foods and flavors
-  Enjoy heating up your sex life (while cooling the earth) with increased vitality and newfound energy
-  And, oh yeah—*save the planet*

No one wakes up saying, “Hey, I’m going to waste water, pollute our rivers, contribute to climate change.”

You may already drive a fuel-efficient (or electric!) vehicle or take the subway or bike or walk to work. Or you may have installed a low-flow showerhead or compact fluorescent lights. Maybe you bring your own shopping bags to the grocery store. You probably recycle—and, shoot, you may even have a compost pile.

You do these things because you care. You want to do your part—you certainly don’t want to make matters worse. The truth is, very little we as individuals do comes close to the environmental impact of what we eat. Michael Pollan (the author who coined the phrase, “Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants”) summed it up at the PopTech conference in 2009: “Our meat eating is one of the most important contributors we make to climate change.”

It’s easy to feel powerless when it comes to climate change. But with OMD, you will realize how much power we *do* have to make things better. I was shocked when I first learned it, but it’s true almost: *nothing* you do can help save the earth as much as opting for meat- and dairy-free meals. OMD has been instrumental in helping many people realize and embrace this power, and this book will give you all the tools you need to experience this for yourself.

In part 1, “Why OMD?” I share the story behind OMD, and why it can be such a powerful agent for change, including the surprising research about animal agriculture, how dramatically eating meat impacts Earth’s ecosystem, and why opting for even a few

more plant-based meals a week makes everyone safer and healthier and the whole world more sustainable. As I said earlier, I'm not a scientist, but I have been very fortunate to work with the best and brightest—when we developed the OMD program at MUSE and while writing this book. Members of the OMD “brain trust”—some of the most respected doctors and researchers in the world—have inspired, advised, and vetted OMD every step of the way.

Then, in part 2, “The OMD Way,” I will give you every single stinking idea, trick, tip, tool, suggestion, recipe, strategy—you name it—that I can think of to make OMD as easy, fun, inexpensive, satisfying, and delicious as possible. I'll help you think through exactly how you can implement OMD into your own life, in what ways and at what pace, and help you discover all the different tools you can use to make it happen, like the Green Eater Meter. This metric, developed with Dr. Maximino Alfredo Mejia in the environmental nutrition group of the Department of Public Health, Nutrition and Wellness at Andrews University, quantifies how much of our precious resources—fresh water, fertile land, clean air—we protect when make these simple swaps for animal products.

The Green Eater Meter will help you visualize and keep track of just how many gallons of water you're saving, how much clean air you're protecting, and even how much natural habitat you're preserving from clear-cutting and deforestation—just from changing one meal a day. Who knew?!

My ultimate goal is to make you fall in love with plant-based eating, so I've also included over fifty delicious OMD recipes that have it all: every possible flavor and texture, every imaginable combination of tastes—sweet, savory, hearty, salty, light, crispy, juicy, smoky. Something for every palate, cooking level, schedule, and budget. Each one of these recipes, contributed by dear family and friends, has its own story.

Because I know people approach change in different ways, I'm offering two plans to choose from. Many prefer to slide in sideways

and trick themselves into small changes. If this sounds like your speed, you'll be right at home in chapter 5, "One Meal a Day." Some people do best with an all-in, full-steam-ahead, stand-back-while-I-blow-up-my-kitchen kind of an approach. That's my style, so I definitely have you covered in chapter 6, "All-In."

I've also included some extra tricks to outsmart that knee-jerk rebellious tendency we all can have from time to time, when we *want* to make positive changes in our lives but we just seem to keep tripping ourselves up. (Hello, you anti-authority types. I get you.)

Yet there is one thing *not* permitted on this program: perfection.

We are not about purity; we are all works in progress. Things you will never find here: Shame. Blame. Finger-wagging. "Shoulds." Direct orders.

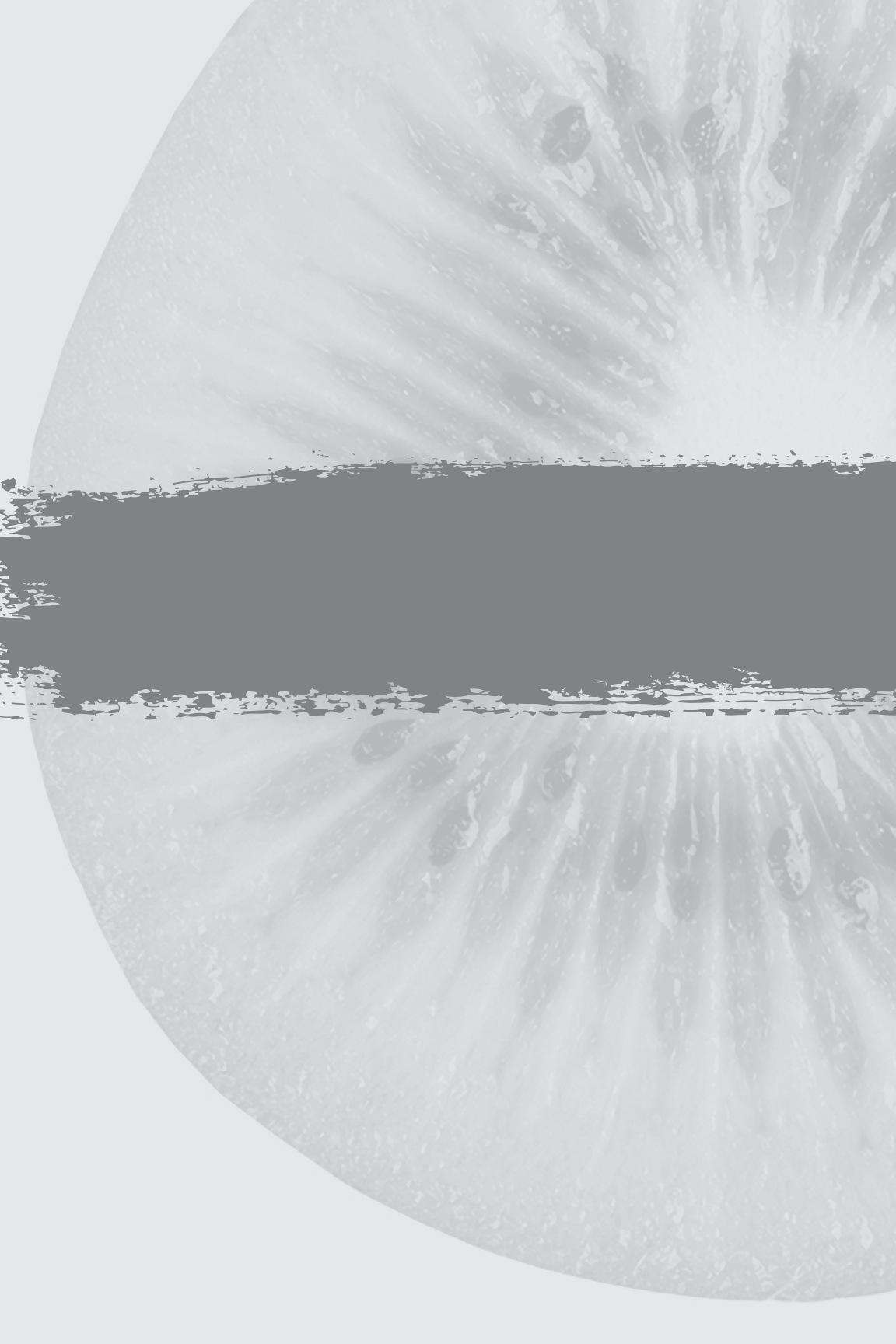
(Or what our family in Oklahoma loves to say: "Whatcha oughta do.")


No beating yourself up. That's not on the menu!

We recognize that everyone makes decisions about what they put into their mouths on a minute-by-minute, meal-by-meal basis. We know that the secret to honoring your intentions is all about preparation—getting ready, anticipating roadblocks, and creating alternate paths—even if it means your OMD today becomes lunch instead of breakfast, or dinner instead of lunch. (Or you just skip today and start fresh tomorrow.)

Most of all, I want you to recognize that this is not a one-and-done program—this is a lifelong conversation with yourself, your body, your family, your community, your physical world—even your soul. I want to help you develop the tools to honor your own intentions, help you celebrate our sacred role in protecting the earth for future generations, and help you make those healthier, happier choices so simple that they become second nature.

We know that the way any meaningful shift happens is one moment at a time. One choice. One change. One bite. One meal at a time. Let's rewrite our story, together.





PART ONE

Why OMD?

Our OMD Journey

Growing up in Oklahoma, I loved two things: horses and flying. I always planned to be a flying vet. My daddy had taught me how to fly, and I grew up around horses—it seemed the perfect career for me. Spending time on farms, caring for those beautiful, majestic creatures, eating produce straight out of the fields—heaven. I loved that land and those animals fiercely, intently. I wanted to protect them with every bone in my body.

As a teen, all my friends were riding English-style, and I wanted an English saddle for my Western cutting horse from our farm, far from a fancy purebred. But my daddy refused to buy it for me. He said, “I will pay to board and feed Toby, and I’ll cover the vet bills, but I am not buying a little bitty saddle.” So I started babysitting for fifty cents an hour.

I’d been doing that for a while when my brother got a camera and made me his subject. His pictures turned out good enough, and my aunt Betsy shared my photos with a local modeling agent, Patty Gers. Suddenly I was doing local fashion shows with my big sister, Page, earning in two hours what would’ve taken me months of babysitting to earn. And when I got the chance to go to New York to meet with Eileen Ford, one of the top modeling agents in the world (thanks again to Aunt Betsy and Patty Gers), I jumped at it.

Well, my first time in New York, over spring break of my junior year, in the span of just four days, I went from sitting in front of Eileen Ford's desk to walking out onto the stage of *The Merv Griffin Show* and being pronounced "The Face of the Eighties" on prime-time television. A totally surreal experience.

Eileen asked me to come back in the summertime to meet with photographers and do interviews. That summer, in a matter of three weeks, I went from standing in Eileen's office to waving goodbye to my parents in Paris, where they left their seventeen-year-old in her new apartment with her newly minted passport.

I quickly learned that the world of high-fashion modeling, which looked so glamorous from the outside, was extremely hard work. Not only did I have to make sure I ate right (to fit in the clothes) and get lots of sleep, I had to show up to work on time, be professional, even navigate international travel.

By the end of the summer, I'd been to Italy three times, to Spain, to London. I had an opportunity to go to Israel and to Morocco. I had also become financially independent.

I started being invited to dinners with interesting, worldly people. I constantly had my nose in a book. I started taking French classes, learning about history, just coming out of my shell. I became a woman in Paris. That experience taught me everything about what a true, authentic education could be when fueled by curiosity and passion.

Claude, my agent, took me around to farmers' markets, taught me the basics of French cooking, and helped me key into the most beautiful aspects of Parisian life. I had always loved vegetables and loved them even more when I was exposed to so many different varieties than just green beans and broccoli. (Although those *haricots verts* were so good!) Well before "nutrient density" became a catchphrase in nutrition, I was learning to eat real food in quantities that kept me in runway shape.

That experience helped protect me from some of the pressures to smoke cigarettes or do drugs or try other “fast” (and dangerous) ways models were using to stay slim. Learning to eat the French way felt healthy and sustainable, gave me a lot of energy—and also taught me even more about the sensory pleasures of vegetables, in all their glorious forms, lessons that would stay with me for life.

By the time I was twenty-one, I’d earned enough to buy my own apartment in New York, in cash—quite an enormous leap from my babysitting wages four years beforehand. At that time, some models were breaking out and becoming actors. My new agency Elite’s commercial booker, Davien Littlefield—who would eventually be my manager for sixteen years—kept saying to me, “You should really try acting.” Finally, I relented, and she set up my first interview.

That “interview” turned out to be my very first film audition—for a bemused Steven Spielberg. I did my thing, and he kindly smiled and asked, “You don’t know anything about this, do you?”

Thankfully, he said there was something “interesting” in my reading, so he introduced me to his protégé, Kevin Reynolds, and that’s how I landed my first film, *Fandango*, with Kevin Costner. *Fandango* was also where I met Sam Robards, my first husband. And if I hadn’t met Sam, I wouldn’t have my eldest son, Jasper.

The Lesson Gets *Real*

I’ve always been passionate about nature and animals. And I’m one of those lucky people who has been in love with the crunch and the color and the flavors of all kinds of vegetables since I was a kid. Still, I don’t think I really understood how it all fit together, on a visceral, spiritual level, until I got pregnant.

After spending four years as a model and then fifteen as an actress, I took the opportunity during my pregnancy with Jasper to relax and eat what I wanted. (I think Jasper was 25 percent crème brûlée.) I gained fifty pounds, and I loved every delicious ounce.

Being pregnant is a perfect window for paying attention to what your body is telling you. You're more attuned to what your skin is telling you, what your energy level is telling you. You start to realize that when you're pregnant and you're full, you're *full*. There's no way around it; there's no more room.

I can remember one night riding in the car with a big Pyrex measuring cup, drinking my precisely measured two cups of milk as prescribed by the *What to Expect When You're Expecting* ladies—had to get that milk quota in! I was also eating a lot of veggies and learning all about organic food. All along, I had this focus on protein—I was constantly being bombarded with messages that I needed to eat meat and drink milk to be strong and grow a strong healthy baby. (I wish I had a dollar for every time my mother had said to us, “Now, you girls remember to drink your milk.”)

Then, once Jasper was born, an even deeper, instinctive protective mechanism kicked in. Everything that my little baby ate, touched, sat on, or slept in had to be as pure as possible. I became hyperfocused on potential toxins in the environment. When Jasper was about eighteen months old and Sam was working in New York, I started doing two movies, one in Chicago and one in South Carolina. My sister Rebecca was a lifesaver—she was Jasper's nanny and my “wife” rolled into one. I would come home from a long day of filming, and she would have dinner ready for us—tons of vegetables, soups, salads, rice cakes—this whole big spread. I must've really loved it because I've eaten that way ever since. It's funny to think back on that now—there was a time many years ago when I was eating very close to plant-based, without putting a label on it, and I remember feeling great.

Sam and I split up when Jasper was three.

Then, when Jasper was six, I met Jim.

Cleaning Out the Cupboards

Jim and I started out on opposite ends of the food spectrum. We first met when he cast me in *Titanic*, and we started dating after I wrapped my part in the film. When I went to his house, I would stand in front of his pantry and stare at the cans of meat chili and sardines, and say to myself, “There is not one thing I can bring myself to eat here.” Literally the only thing I could find to eat was Rice Krispies.

Once we were married, I slowly shifted the composition to an organic pantry—I added some things, replaced some things. As each of our three children were born, I started moving some of the less healthy stuff up to the higher shelves. We carried on living our busy lives—Jim making his films, me opening MUSE School with my sister, together raising our kids.

Then one day, about a decade after we first got together, Jim came in and looked in the pantry and said, “This pantry is full and there is not one thing in here that I want to eat.” He was joking, of course. But I think a moment like this comes in most marriages or cohabitations—when what feels right and tastes good to one person might be exactly the opposite of what the other person craves or needs to feel nourished. Making changes as a family takes a lot of diplomacy, patience, and understanding. Yet those changes in the pantry were just the warm-up for the big one we were about to make, together.

In the spring of 2012, I thought we were doing really well on the food front—our family ate organic grass-fed beef, free-range chicken, omega-3-packed eggs, in addition to a ton of vegetables. We had organic milk and cheese and yogurt. We grew most of our own produce and had goats at our ranch (and made yogurt and cheese from their milk). We were operating under the assumption that we needed that milk, we needed that meat, we needed those eggs. And

we were feeding everyone at MUSE the same way. The protein! We had to have our meat and dairy!

At the same time, I had just turned fifty, Jim was heading toward sixty, and we were also starting to see some of our siblings and friends develop health concerns. I began looking at Jim and myself and wondering if we were next. We both have heart disease and cancer in our families. I didn't want that for us. I knew there had to be another way—but what?

One day, I was headed to our workout room, and I picked up the DVD of the documentary *Forks Over Knives*. It had been on my shelf for nine months. My friend Elliot Washor had recommended it to me, and he kept talking about it for over a year. So that day, May 6, 2012, I grabbed it, thinking, “OK, fine, I'll watch this today.”

Well, fast-forward to ten minutes later—and I had to get off the treadmill and just sit down and watch the film. It felt like my entire world was falling apart. Here I thought I was giving my family and the children at MUSE the best and highest quality of foods. But now I felt bamboozled. I felt betrayed.

Forks Over Knives is a documentary based on the works of Dr. T. Colin Campbell, a nutritional biochemist from Cornell University, and Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn, a former surgeon from the Cleveland Clinic. The movie traces the experiences of a group of people who used plant-based eating to reverse degenerative disease. Watching that film, I felt like I had been lied to my whole life; that the people and institutions I'd trusted to take care of us had been misleading us for generations, pushing aside the health and well-being of children and families. I heard the echoes of all those nutritional maxims I'd taken on faith: *You need meat to build muscle. You need milk to build strong bones and teeth.* And now I knew it was a gigantic, decades-long, lobbyist-supported lie for the meat and dairy industries' bottom line.






Shaken to my core, I only knew that I had to have Jim watch with me. I had to know if the film would affect him the way it had affected me. I dearly hoped it would, because I already knew my life had been irrevocably changed.

The very next day, I sat there and watched him as he watched it, but he didn't say a word. The second the film ended, he stood right up, walked out of the room, and by the time we got to the kitchen, he said, "We can't have any animal products in our house anymore."

Twenty-four hours later, we had cleared everything out. Bam!

Now, that's just how Jim and I roll—we commit to something, and we go all in. No turning back.

In the following months, we gobbled up as much info as we could about plant-based eating. I found out that part of that gorgeous glow people always talk about comes from the fact that plant-based eaters literally age more slowly, on a cellular level, than meat-and-dairy eaters. Plant-based eating increases the body's own antiaging activity by raising our level of telomerase, the enzyme that makes it possible for our genes to repair themselves, and plant-based bodies have less inflammation, the process that drives cellular aging and can make us look (and feel) old before our time. For every extra 3 percent of plant protein we eat, we cut our risk of death by 10 percent.¹ And I read studies showing that compared to people whose diets are meat- and dairy-focused, people who focus their eating on fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds, and whole grains:

-  Live on average almost 3.6 years longer²
-  Have a 24 percent lower risk of developing heart disease³
-  Have a 25 percent lower risk of developing diabetes⁴
-  Have a 43 percent lower risk of developing cancer⁵
-  Have a 57 percent lower risk of developing Alzheimer's disease or dementia⁶

And now here we are, over six years later, and we're both healthier than we've ever been. Almost no illness. Jim lost thirty-plus pounds. He can work out harder and longer than ever, run for miles barefoot on the beach, do yoga twice a week. He kickboxes. On Mondays and Thursdays he works out for three hours, then takes two- to three-mile walks with me at night—can't slow this guy down. He has seemingly aged in reverse.

My diet hasn't changed that dramatically—I always was a sucker for salads and soups, those foods I learned to love in Oklahoma, in my days in Paris, and with my sister. Now that I'm 100 percent plant-based, I find that I can work out harder than ever. My recovery is better than ever. I can easily slide into any pair of pants in my closet, without a second thought, without ever monitoring what I'm eating or how much. No more fifteen-pound fluctuations. I am in better shape now than I was in my twenties.

Now, did I initially have cravings for yogurt and cheese? Yeah. (Wait, let's get real: I was totally addicted to yogurt and cheese.) After living in Paris, I know a good cheese when I see it (or smell it). Have I ever craved a nice creamy cup of black tea with half-and-half and vanilla on Christmas morning? You bet. But those cravings have become more and more rare as the years go on, as my tastes have changed and the plant-based marketplace has exploded with satisfying, super-yummy alternatives.

On the whole, I've been resolute, as has Jim—and certain things made the transition easier for us. First, we are lucky to have each other as partners. We can support each other because we share this mission, a love for the environment and a feeling of responsibility to do all we can; plant-based eating has become our common project. And this shift was made possible by that moment with *Forks Over Knives*, seeing how we'd been lied to by the meat and medical industries, and wanting to reclaim our health after that sense of betrayal. It's kind of like the feeling you'd get when you binged on a certain

food as a kid, then got sick from it—you just can't see the appeal anymore. All you can see is how bad it makes you feel.

Healthier for Us, Healthier for the Earth

Like many couples, our walks and time alone are essential, a non-negotiable that we've scheduled since the early days of our relationship. With a dog and a stick to throw, we set off to reconnect and work through the minutiae of raising kids, work, and marriage. We talk about the health of our parents, the puppy that's waking me up all night, our five kids, a new person we've met; we wrestle with challenges and share new ideas and projects. It's sacred composting. We both have big lives, big families, and big purpose. By handling the domestic stuff and getting it out of the way, we can get to the heartbeat of our life together.

A few months after our shift to plant-based eating, Jim and I were up at our ranch for summer break. Jim was writing the *Avatar* sequels. I was doing the summer hustle with our three-of-five kids still at home and various cousins and friends and dogs. Jim had started to share all he knew about the environmental impact of animal agriculture, pointing me to dozens of books and documentaries. Again, I was gutted. I learned that animal agriculture was responsible for the loss of 70 to 80 percent of the Amazon rain forest. That 17 percent of all global fresh water usage went to livestock production. That animal agriculture is one of the leading causes of extinction. And dead zones in the ocean. And deforestation. And the final gut punch? That animal agriculture contributes 14.5 percent of all human-caused greenhouse gas emissions, *more than the entire transportation sector combined*.

When I'd learned about the health effects of animal products, I'd been knocked for such a loop. Now I was stunned again. "You're kidding—not only is this way of eating killing us, but it's also polluting the planet? Animal agriculture and our overwhelming appetite for meat and dairy are *creating* climate change?"

Walking on the beach near the ranch, we talked about how to get our family and friends interested in plant-based eating and how to expand the circle. We started thinking about environmental impacts: If each of those people could eat more plant-based meals, how much would the environmental savings multiply with more and more of us eating sustainably? We started getting excited.

Now, let me add, parenthetically, what may be obvious to anyone who's seen Jim's movies: My husband is a doomsday kind of guy. (I mean, *Aliens*? *The Terminator*? *Avatar*?) He has a T-shirt with a bottom line that reads, "Hope is not a strategy." He's emergency-ready and primed for disaster. We'd been talking about climate change for a long time. The prospect of the apocalypse of climate change had always been easier for him to imagine than for me. For *years*, I would come home from depressing environmental NGO meetings, where we'd been regaled with slide after slide of environmental degradation, and I would be so disheartened that I instinctively shifted into being the cheerleader. "It'll be OK! We're going to clean up the oceans! We'll recycle, change our light bulbs, drive a Prius. . . ."

When he used to listen to my chirpy, upbeat ideas for saving the planet, he'd smile kindly and say, "That's great, babe—but it's not going to move the needle." He was over there thinking big system change, realizing that those incremental changes, even when adopted broadly, would never make up the difference necessary.

But that night on the beach, Jim turned to me. "For the first time in my life, I have hope," he said. "The more people we can get to go plant-based, the better chance we'll have of addressing climate change. Doing that *will* move the needle."

I stopped. Had I just heard the man use the word *HOPE*?! The man who had imprinted aliens launching out of stomachs and Arnold Schwarzenegger going postal on our cultural memory?

Jim's words galvanized me, lighting a fire that's since become an inferno.

We can do this.

Going plant-based changed everything. We started to realize that every meal *did* matter—that even small steps toward plant-based eating can have a tremendous impact on the environment, and that we could start to have a massive impact *right now*, at our own kitchen tables. We don’t need a single elected official to do a single noble thing; we don’t have to wait for the politicians to lead. We have to lead, and politicians will follow.

Remember those Viking ships of yore, with those long oars? The more rowers a ship had, the faster it would go. I keep thinking we are all on a boat like that—the more people who get on the boat, the more arms we’ll have, rowing in the same direction, and the faster it will go.

As I tell more and more people about plant-based eating, I’ve imagined more and more people getting on our trusty Viking ship. I’ve been overjoyed to see how fast the message has spread, how many lives have been changed, and how great of an impact we can have every single day.

We can commit this revolutionary act right now. We can all jump on board together, all start rowing in the same direction. We can get where we want to be—*fast*. All we have to do is change our lunch order.

And, funnily enough, that’s how the OMD concept started: with lunch.

The Birth of OMD

The idea of eating One Meal a Day for the Planet was born at MUSE School, the passion- and interest-based learning environmental school based in Calabasas, California, that I founded with my sister Rebecca Amis. We poured our souls into creating MUSE. When we started almost thirteen years ago, we wanted to create an innovative, energizing learning environment for our own kids—and then we quickly realized that we wanted to share that kind of experience with many others.

When my kids first started school, I was terrified. I thought back to my own school experiences—how I’d dreaded school as a child, how I had focused so much on fitting in. I watched our older children, Jasper and Josa, suffer in demoralizing, stifling, punitive school settings. Rebecca’s kids were similar in age to mine, and she has a master’s in early childhood education. In Wichita, Kansas, she’d opened a Reggio Emilia early childhood program, a child-centered program that utilizes self-directed, experiential learning in relationship-driven environments. When she introduced me to this method of teaching, I was sold. We believed in this approach to our core, and we decided to go for it.

We began MUSE with the belief that true learning is possible when children are permitted to engage in their passions. We articulated a mission, inspiring and preparing young people to live consciously with themselves, one another, and the planet, with a focus on a sustainable campus.

We believed in the mission with all our hearts, and pursued it in every way possible—we *thought*. Yet a few years into being plant-based at home, and after working very hard to try to fulfill our vision of a carbon-neutral, energy-independent campus, Rebecca and I realized we weren’t honoring *our* own hearts. Rebecca, her husband, Jeff, Jim, and I had already had a major awakening in the food we ate, and we’d all gone plant-based. We were sharing it with everyone in our lives—we had our own little community, trading notes and recipes. But Rebecca and I hadn’t yet translated it to the school. We knew we needed to go 100 percent plant-based to truly model a 100 percent sustainable and environmentally focused school. And while we’d always thought we were serving these kids the best possible food, we now realized we were unintentionally poisoning them. And the planet.

We assumed everyone would feel the same. So, in January 2014, we joyfully scheduled a screening of the documentary *Forks Over Knives* during a professional development day and told the teach-

ers and staff of our plans: We were going to take eighteen months to transition, and by September 2015, we would be a fully plant-based school. The first plant-based school in the nation.

Weren't they excited?

Well, suffice it to say . . . not exactly. We encountered more resistance than we had anticipated, to put it mildly. About one-third of the staff just sat there with their arms crossed—I could almost see their heels digging in. They didn't even want to watch the film—they thought we'd be showing them videos about baby cows being led to slaughter. (Spoiler: No baby cow slaughter.)

One staffer, let's call her Ellen, was adamantly opposed. Wasn't having any of it. Didn't even want to watch the video. But she did—with arms crossed the whole time.

Well, that was in the spring, before summer break. Fast-forward three months, and by fall, Ellen was back—hair gleaming, eyes shining. Arthritis gone. Energy through the roof. Finally able to sit on the floor with her kids again and move around easily. Complete one-eighty from the spring. It was such a beautiful sight to see her so happy and energetic, just glowing.

Why, Ellen, you little sneak. After kicking up such a fuss, she had gone home over the summer and tried it—she went plant-based. She lost thirty pounds and completely transformed her life in a matter of months.

Thereafter, we saw this same transition happen among staff members again and again. The assistant head of school, same thing—forty pounds gone, ditched his medications. Literally had to buy a whole new wardrobe. PR manager, thirty pounds. Given a clean bill of health after some tricky thyroid issues.

With those initial skeptics now fully on board, it was time to float the idea with the parents.

Again, the same reaction: *No. Way.*

So many people were good and kind, devoted to the planet,

committed to the mission of the school . . . and extremely disappointed in us. Let's be frank: it was full-on mutiny.

People were up in arms. *How will my child get enough protein? Why is he eating so much rice? He can't make it through the day without his beef jerky!*

I recognized their resistance—hadn't I been there myself? Both Jim and I had been convinced animal-based protein was essential to health, too, so I could understand their reluctance. The pro-meat messages we've all received for so long are lodged deep into our collective belief system around food. We all need a little deprogramming from a lifetime of misinformation.

My sister and I remained resolute—we needed to find a way. We worked with the parents—we listened to all their concerns, we talked everything through with Kayla, our brilliant chef. We experimented and we tinkered and we talked some more. We created MUSE Talks: Once a month, plant-based experts from all different disciplines came in to spend the whole day with our school community. They'd talk to the kids—from the little bitty ones all the way up to the high schoolers, in developmentally appropriate ways. Rip Esselstyn, former triathlete and author of *The Engine 2 Diet*, along with Rich Roll, ultra-endurance athlete and author of *Finding Ultra*, talked to them about being strong and healthy and working out. Dr. Neal Barnard, founder of the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine and author of seventeen books, talked to them about protecting their health with plant-based eating. *Veganist* author Kathy Freston and performing artist/animal activist Moby talked to them about animals. Celebrity vegan chef Tal Ronnen did a beautiful and super-yummy cooking demonstration for us. And then we'd do a nighttime presentation to the parents and the general public. We served plant-based meals and a glass of wine, and everyone learned from an amazing roster of brilliant people. All these dynamic, plant-based advocates

taught us an enormous amount about plant-based eating and how to move toward it in a fun, easy, and satisfying way.

During these discussions, I'll admit it—I was in heaven. I'll never forget when T. Colin Campbell came to meet with us—there he was, the groundbreaking author of *The China Study*, the paradigm-shifting book that helped inspire the creation of *Forks Over Knives*, right there in the driveway. I was star-struck; I don't get star-struck normally, but he is a superstar to us. Same thing happened when I talked to Dr. Michael Greger, author of *How Not to Die*, a bestselling book on plant-based lifestyle (and a highly entertaining video star on his impeccably researched website, NutritionFacts.org), on the phone. I was so nervous. I felt like a giddy groupie, I was so excited to talk to him!

This roster of geniuses supported us through the transition and has developed into a giant, committed OMD brain trust that has continued to collaborate with us on everything from those first OMD menu plans to information nights and ongoing curriculum to developing products and programs, and even to helping inform public policy and international advocacy campaigns. We are so lucky to partner with these passionate visionaries as we all work hard to spread the word and create more plant-based solutions for public health and climate change.

Throughout that entire eighteen-month OMD transition process, the goal of many of these inspiring talks was simply to reassure parents that it would be okay: "It's just one meal. It's just one meal a day." After all, we were only talking about lunch here—everyone was welcome to eat as they wished at home.

Still, many heels remained dug in. The school community seemed stuck.

Part of me just wanted to say, "Fine. You can feed them eggs and bacon in the morning and a big burger at night."

Then one day, Rebecca's husband, Jeff King, who is the head of school, just said, "OMG, people. It's just OMD."

And OMD: One Meal a Day for the Planet, was born.

All of a sudden, the light bulb went off: People really understood. And opened up. They saw that we weren't asking them to become vegan, or even vegetarian. We were just talking about lunch and snacks. We were just saying, "In this one place, at this one time each day, we are going to make a conscious choice not to use animal products and dedicate that meal to healing the earth."

Finally, we did it. We won hearts and minds. And OMD became the motto of the MUSE lunchroom.

The results of the whole process were truly amazing. We found a way to get everyone what they needed. The parents were reassured by doctors and nutritionists that their children's protein and other nutritional needs were being met. The kids were reassured that they weren't going to be eating hay bales every day. The staff were reassured that the kids' plant-based lunches would sustain them through their afternoons of outdoor exploration and passion projects. The students really threw themselves into growing their own food in our campus gardens. They've increased their yield to the point where now, MUSE students tend 150 raised beds and grow 80 to 90 percent of the produce they eat in the lunchroom every day.

We have conversion experiences with kids all the time. They start school saying, "I hate eating anything green." The next thing you know, a month in, they're eating sautéed green beans sprinkled with flaxseed oil. It helps that the kids are in the garden growing the beans themselves, so they're able to taste them right off the vine.

We have kids cutting down on their allergy medication. Kids who'd been less active now dropping pounds and climbing hills. Kids who'd been on medication for ADD and ADHD and ABCDEFG now feeling calmer and more focused, even able to get off their meds completely.

These days, rather than resistance and pushback, we have families who seek us out *because* we are plant-based. Families want to

have their children on a dye-free, toxin-free, pesticide-free campus, and they want to know where the food their children are eating is coming from. We even had two families move all the way from New York to have their children attend MUSE.

These days, every school year begins with an invitation for students to join together in the OMD mission and to sign their names to a pledge: *I want to make this happen. Together with my school community, I will eat One Meal a Day for the Planet, or Two, or All-In.* We celebrate this moment with them, and the children have *embraced it*, on a soul level—they’ve made the connection between what they put on their plate and the air they breathe and the water they drink and the future of their planet. They’ve internalized this connection, in part, by following this simple practice that allows them to *live it*, every single day.

Together, We Can Heal the World

I have learned a tremendous amount during this process. In talking to my family, the teaching staff, the students, and their families, I’ve learned so many different concerns that people have when making this transition: all the fears, the misconceptions, the cravings. And through trial and error, I’ve learned how to craft an approach that can satisfy even the most reluctant kid (or adult) and lure them into embracing OMD as their own.

I’ve seen the seemingly miraculous transformations that have come about from this one small change—the health benefits never cease to amaze me. (I call these “benefit effects”—in contrast to the damaging “side effects” we get from eating the standard meat-based diet.) And I know that these changes are making a measurable impact on our precious Earth, helping to keep her air, waters, and soil clean for future generations. I know without a doubt that if everyone changed just one meal a day, we could start to reverse our course to save our planet. Just one person and one meal can have that much impact.

That's my inspiration for sharing OMD with you. And I want you to succeed, which is why I've designed this book as an all-in-one resource to help you transition to this new way of eating. First I'll share findings from the large and growing body of research proving plant-based nutrition can help reverse a variety of chronic diseases, including diabetes and heart disease, and reduce your risk of cancer. You'll hear stories from people who've used OMD to shift toward more plant-based eating, and how it helped them lose weight, feel more energetic, and even think more clearly. You'll learn why each meal you eat has such a tremendous impact on the environment. Then I'll share everything you need to get ready for OMD, including dozens of tips, tools, and techniques to help you troubleshoot the rough spots so you can discover how delicious and easy it can be to eat more plants. And finally, you can explore over fifty beloved, simple, satisfying recipes from MUSE and my family and friends, each one tried and tested in real family kitchens and approved by even the most resistant carnivores.

I promise you that within a short period of eating more plant-based meals, you'll feel stronger, sharper, and more energetic than you have in years—perhaps healthier than you ever have. And you'll feel even better knowing that you're doing everything within your power to help heal the planet. (Because, boy, does she need our help!)

Now, you and I don't live together, so I'm not going to be able to sit down with you for an hour and a half so we can watch *Forks Over Knives*—so I'm going to pull in some help. Next you'll hear from our OMD medical brain trust as they share decades of compelling research that has powered millions of plant-based health make-overs. My goal is to show you exactly what the OMD way of eating can do for the health of your entire family, not just now, or in twenty years, but for generations and generations into the future.